

## Against the Grain

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# Bet You Missed It-What do barbeque and bird-watching have in common?

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# Bet You Missed It

## Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

**Editor's Note:** Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to *Against the Grain's* attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

### BIRD WATCHING FOR THE HOI POLLOI by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Roger Tory Peterson's** *A Field Guide to the Birds* (1934) brought an egalitarian revolution to what had been a rarified activity of the leisured class. Elected President the year before, the Hudson Valley patrician **Franklin Roosevelt** was a birder.

There had been bird guides before. *The Bird Book* (1897) and Audubon's *Birds of North America* were authoritative but too big to lug in the field. **Peterson** met that challenge in putting mountains of information into a book light enough to carry about. The first printing of 2,000 sold out in a week.

**Peterson** ushered ordinary people into the field to spot the birds, and **Rachel Carson's** *Silent Spring* warned of the destruction caused by DDT. Together the two books begat environmentalism.

See — **Laura Jacobs**, "Knowing a Hawk From a Handsaw," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 26-27, 2012, p.C5.

### DUCHY OF CURZON STREET by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Heywood Hill** is a 75-year-old Mayfair bookshop that inside resembles an "overstuffed library." It opened in 1936, smack in the middle of the Great Depression, and only survived because of draconian wartime rationing. Books could be bought in unlimited quantities, so folks with money did.

**Nancy Mitford** was also a big help, clerking there for three pounds a week and attracting military officers after lunch at their clubs. **Evelyn Waugh** described it as "all that was left of fashionable and intellectual London."

**Nancy's** sister **Debo** — the only one to marry well — the Duke of Devonshire — lived two doors away and bought a majority share. Their son the current Duke still holds it. And it's still there thriving on Curzon Street, if you're in London.

See — **Catherine Ostler**, "Noblesse Oblige," *Town & Country*, Aug. 2012, p.37.

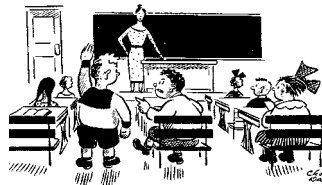
### HOT CLIMATE HIJINKS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Lord Byron:** "What men call gallantry, and gods adultery, is much more common where the climate's sultry."

*I'm not sure why Michael Arlen is on the list, but Emily Hahn is a forgotten gem of a journalist. She lived in a brothel in old Shanghai, was the mistress of a Chinese poet, and managed to become an opium addict. All to get the story right.*

(1) **James Fox**, *White Mischief* (1982); (2) **Somerset Maugham**, *The Painted Veil* (1925); (3) **Graham Greene**, *The Comedians* (1966); (4) **Emily Hahn**, *Miss Jill* (1947); (5) **Michael Arlen**, *The Green Hat* (1924).

See — **Paul French**, "Five Best: on colonial shenanigans and expatriate misadventures," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 19-20, 2012, p.C10. (**Paul French** is the author of *Midnight in Peking: How the Murder of a Young Englishwoman Haunted the Last Days of Old China* (Penguin, 2012)).



### EPISTOLARY BUNDLES by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

(1) *Byron's Letters and Journals*; (2) *Cicero: Selected Letters*; (3) *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert*; (4) *Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya* (letters exchanged by **Vladimir Nabokov** and **Edmund Wilson**); (5) *Dear Lupin: Letters to a Wayward Son*.

See — **Frederic Raphael**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 17-18, 2012, p.C17.

### "IONESCO EXIT OFF INTERSTATE 40" by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Charles Portis** is mostly known for *True Grit* (1968) and the movie versions with **John Wayne** and the **Coen Brothers**. But his other five novels have their avid fans: *Norwood* (1966); *A Dog of the South*, (1979); *Masters of Atlantis* (1985); *Gringos* (1991); and now his latest, *Escape Velocity*. His work labeled "Motel Life, Lower Reaches," is mostly tales of road trips where ordinary people end up back at their modest beginnings.

See — **Wes Davis**, "Bard of the Byways," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 17-18, 2012, p.C10.

### BOOKSTORE MEMORIES by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Author **Richard Russo** celebrates his lifelong attachment to the first bookstore of his youth — **Alyord and Smith Stationers** in Gloversville, NY. As a boy he would sit on the floor in front of the long rows of *Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* mysteries, *Ken Holt* and *Rick Brant* series, and absorb the magic. He says bookstores "remain places of wonder. Like libraries, they're the physical manifestation of the world's longest, most thrilling conversation."

See — **Richard Russo**, "Places of Wonder," (Excerpted from *My Bookstore: Writers Celebrate Their Favorite Places to Browse, Read and Shop* [Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers]), *Parade*, Nov. 18, 2012, p.20.

### GREEKS "BRAAI" THEIR MUTTON by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The *Iliad* has had 70 different English translations plus dozens into foreign languages. Now retired classics professor **Richard Whitaker** has spent ten years putting it into South African English, a patois of antique British and a dozen African languages. Thus we get "braai," the South African word for barbecue, "kraals" for homesteads, and Achilles decimates many Trojan "impis" with his "assegai."

Four South African university presses rejected it and would not respond to calls from *The Wall Street Journal*, leaving **Whitaker** to self-publish. You can buy it at *Southernaficaniliad.com*.

See — **Patrick McGroarty**, "Sing to Me, Muse, the South African Word for 'Spear,'" *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 12, 2012, p.A1.